

~~SECRET SENSITIVE~~

1.5(e)  
3.4(b)(1)

12 September 1972

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Comments of North Vietnamese Official [REDACTED]  
Concerning the Pending Release in Hanoi of  
Three American Prisoners of War

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On 8 September, [REDACTED] made the following comments concerning the North Vietnamese intent to release three American prisoners of war (POWs).

A. The North Vietnamese announcement to release the three Americans was done for no reason other than as a humanitarian gesture on the occasion of the North Vietnamese National Day. It is not the result of, nor does it have anything to do with, private talks as the U.S. has claimed.

B. At the last release of POWs, the U.S. used the issue for propaganda and to distort the news. When the POWs were released in Vientiane, the U.S. instructed its embassy to "kidnap" the POWs at once. The POWs were then taken to the U.S. for several months of brainwashing.

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Then, when the U. S. finally held a press conference for the POWs, they gave a story which was unfavorable to North Vietnam and said that they were ill-treated by the North Vietnamese. Some of the POWs were used again as tools in the war. Thus, the whole thing came to nothing. That is why the other day Cora Weiss and others of the Committee of Liaison with Families of Servicemen Detained in North Vietnam specified that this release is for no other than a humanitarian reason. It has been declared precisely that the U. S. Government no longer has the right to take advantage of the POWs in order to distort facts and to use them again in the war. The Committee has warned Nixon not to do it again and Xuan Thuy also has made mention of it.

C. The POWs will be turned over to Cora Weiss, David Dillenger, representatives of the Committee of Liaison with Families of Servicemen Detained in North Vietnam and representatives of other American organizations. They are nominating a group of five people to go to Hanoi and, if nothing happens, they will be going on 16 September. (Headquarters Comment:

a "Mrs. Showpine" was mentioned as one who will probably go to North Vietnam to receive the POWs. She was not otherwise identified, however.) In Hanoi, the POWs will be turned over to them on one condition -- that they escort them to the U. S. and personally take them directly to their families and not to the U. S. Government. The North Vietnamese insist that the U. S. Government not interfere or arrest anybody.

D. Only time will tell what the stubborn Americans will do in this situation. They had the nerve to show up at the press conference and immediately afterwards seek out Weiss and Dillenger in order to offer their help in bringing the POWs back. They even bluntly asked Weiss if the Committee needed any financial aid for the trip.

E. This POW release in itself indirectly helps the North Vietnamese cause because Nixon has been bragging. Nixon has declared that he will leave his Army in South Vietnam until the POWs are released. He keeps giving the argument that if he pulled out his troops, who would guarantee the return of the POWs? He only says that in order to create curiosity and suspicion so that Americans will not support the North Vietnamese. But now, three POWs are being released as proof that he is wrong, and this will make people protest more against Nixon for using the POW issue to advance the war.

F. In turning over the three POWs to Weiss, Dillenger and those American organizations, the North Vietnamese are turning them over to the American people. The fact that Edward Kennedy was informed of this release does not mean that he has anything to do with it nor does it mean that it was done through him. The POWs are officially being turned over to the American people.

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